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**FOVEATED VIDEO CODING SYSTEM**

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# **FOVEATED VIDEO CODING SYSTEM AND METHOD**

## **FIELD OF INVENTION**

This invention pertains to the field of video compression and  
5 transmission, and in particular to a video coding system and method which  
incorporate foveation information to decrease video bandwidth requirements.

## **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

In recent years, many methods for digital video compression have  
10 been proposed. Many of these methods, such as the MPEG 2 video compression  
standard, as described in "Information Technology – Generic Coding of Moving  
Pictures and Associated Audio Information: Video, ISO/IEC International  
Standard 13818-2," exploit both spatial and temporal redundancies in the video  
data to reduce the bandwidth necessary to accurately represent the data. Stereo  
15 video sequences are also handled by the MPEG 2 standard, which uses a  
multiview profile to code stereo, exploiting correlation between the left and right  
eye views to decrease the necessary bandwidth to represent the data.

The human visual system can also be considered to further reduce  
the bandwidth necessary to represent a video sequence. Foveated coding systems  
20 encode different regions of an image with varying resolution and/or fidelity based  
on the gaze point of the observer. Regions of an image removed from an  
observer's gaze point can be aggressively compressed due to the observer's  
decreasing sensitivity away from the point of gaze.

For video sequences of high resolution and wide field of view, such  
25 as may be encountered in an immersive display environment, efficient  
compression is critical to reduce the data to a manageable bandwidth. This  
compression can be achieved both through standard video coding techniques that  
exploit spatial and temporal redundancies in the data as well as through foveated  
video coding. Additionally, the video sequence may need to be initially encoded  
30 off-line for two reasons: first, the large size of the video sequence may prohibit  
real-time encoding, and second, limited available storage space for the video  
sequence may prevent storage of the uncompressed video. One example of such

an application is transmission of streaming video across a network with limited bandwidth to an observer in an immersive home theater environment. The high data content of the immersive video and the limited bandwidth available for transmission necessitate high compression. The large size of the video frames  
 5 also necessitates off-line encoding to ensure high quality encoding and also allow real-time transmission and decoding of the video. Because the video must initially be encoded off-line, foveated video processing based on actual observer gaze point data cannot be incorporated into the initial encoding. Instead, the compressed video stream is transcoded at the server to incorporate additional  
 10 foveation-based compression.

Geisler et al. in U.S. Patent No. 6,252,989 describe a foveated image coding system. Their system is designed, however, for sequences which can be encoded in real-time after foveation information is transmitted to the encoder. Additionally, each frame of the sequence is coded independently, thus  
 15 not exploiting temporal redundancy in the data and not achieving maximal compression. The independent encoding of individual frames does not extend well to stereo sequences either, as it fails to take advantage of the correlation between the left and right eye views of a given image. Weiman et al (U.S. Patent No. 5,103,306) describe a similar system for real-time independent encoding of  
 20 video frames incorporating foveation information to decrease the bandwidth of the individual frames.

Lee et al. ("Foveated Video Compression with Optimal Rate Control," *IEEE Transactions on Image Processing*, July 2001) describe a video coding system which incorporates motion estimation and compensation in the  
 25 compression scheme to exploit temporal redundancies in the data, as well as incorporating foveation coding to further decrease bandwidth. Their system, however, is also designed for sequences that can be encoded in real-time.

In commonly assigned U.S. Serial No. 09/971,346 ("Method and System for Displaying an Image,"), which was also published as EP1301021A2  
 30 on 9 April 2003, Miller et al. introduce an encoding scheme in which a video sequence is initially compressed using JPEG2000 compression on individual frames. Bandwidth is subsequently further decreased by selectively transmitting

portions of the compressed image based on foveation information. While this system allows the video sequence to be initially encoded off-line, it does not exploit temporal redundancy in the video data to achieve maximal compression. Nor does it extend well to stereo sequences, as the individual encoding of frames  
5 precludes taking advantage of the correlation between left and right eye views of an image.

There is a need, therefore, for a video coding system which initially encodes a video sequence independent of any foveation information, yet exploiting both temporal and spatial redundancies in the video data. Additionally,  
10 there is a need for this system to efficiently encode stereo video sequences, exploiting the correlation between left and right eye sequences. There is also a need for this system to encode the video in such a manner that the bandwidth required to subsequently transmit the video sequence can be further reduced at a server by foveated video processing.

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### **SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

It is an object of the present invention to encode the video sequence in such a way that the bandwidth required to subsequently transmit the sequence can be further reduced at the server by foveated video processing.

20 It is a further object of the present invention to provide a system and method which efficiently encode a video sequence, exploiting both spatial and temporary redundancies in the video sequence, as well as exploiting left eye and right eye correlations in stereo sequences.

The present invention is directed to overcoming one or more of the  
25 problems set forth above. Briefly summarized, according to one aspect of the present invention, the invention resides in a method for transcoding a frequency transform-encoded digital video signal representing a sequence of video frames to produce a compressed digital video signal for transmission over a limited bandwidth communication channel to a display, where the method comprises the  
30 steps of: (a) providing a frequency transform-encoded digital video signal having encoded frequency coefficients representing a sequence of video frames, wherein the encoding removes temporal redundancies from the video signal and encodes

the frequency coefficients as base layer frequency coefficients in a base layer and as residual frequency coefficients in an enhancement layer; (b) identifying a gaze point of an observer on the display; (c) partially decoding the encoded digital video signal to recover the frequency coefficients; (d) adjusting the residual  
5 frequency coefficients to reduce the high frequency content of the video signal in regions away from the gaze point; (e) recoding the frequency coefficients, including the adjusted residual frequency coefficients, to produce a foveated transcoded digital video signal; and (f) displaying the foveated transcoded digital video signal to the observer.

10           The present invention has the advantage that it efficiently encodes the sequence in such a manner that allows a server to further reduce the necessary bandwidth to transmit the sequence by incorporating foveated video processing. Additionally, it efficiently encodes a video sequence, exploiting spatial, temporal and stereo redundancies to maximize overall compression.

15           These and other aspects, objects, features and advantages of the present invention will be more clearly understood and appreciated from a review of the following detailed description of the preferred embodiments and appended claims, and by reference to the accompanying drawings.

## 20           **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

FIG. 1 shows a diagram of the encoding and storage of a video sequence.

FIG. 2 shows a diagram of the transcoding, transmission, decoding and display of a compressed video sequence according to the present invention.

25           FIG. 3 shows a diagram of the structure of a video sequence compressed using fine granularity scalability of the streaming video profile of MPEG 4.

FIG. 4 shows a diagram of the preferred embodiment of the video transcoding and transmission unit of FIG. 2 according to the present invention.

30           FIG. 5 shows further details of the enhancement layer foveation processing unit of the present invention as shown in FIG. 4.

FIG. 6 shows an example of the discardable coefficient bitplanes

for a foveated DCT block in the enhancement layer.

FIG. 7 shows a flow chart of the video compression unit of FIG. 1 when JPEG2000 is used in a motion-compensated video compression scheme.

FIG. 8 shows a flow chart of the video transcoding and  
5 transmission unit of FIG. 2 used with a JPEG2000 encoded video sequence.

FIG. 9 shows the structure of a stereo video sequence compressed using the MPEG 2 multiview profile in the base layer, and a bitplane DCT coding of residual coefficients in the enhancement layer.

FIG. 10 shows a diagram of the video transcoding and transmission  
10 unit used with a stereo video sequence.

FIG. 11 shows a diagram of the structure of a stereo video sequence compressed using fine granularity scalability of the streaming video profile of MPEG 4.

## 15 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Because image processing systems employing foveated video coding are well known, the present description will be directed in particular to attributes forming part of, or cooperating more directly with, method and system in accordance with the present invention. Attributes not specifically shown or  
20 described herein may be selected from those known in the art. For instance, elements of the cited encoding systems, e.g., MPEG 2 and 4 and JPEG2000, are also well known in the art and numerous references in the art may be consulted for details of their implementation. In the following description, a preferred embodiment of the present invention would ordinarily be implemented as a  
25 software program, although those skilled in the art will readily recognize that the equivalent of such software may also be constructed in hardware. Given the description according to the invention in the following materials, software not specifically shown, suggested or described herein that is useful for implementation of the invention is conventional and within the ordinary skill in  
30 such arts. If the invention is implemented as a computer program, the program may be stored in conventional computer readable storage medium, which may comprise, for example; magnetic storage media such as a magnetic disk (such as a

floppy disk or a hard drive) or magnetic tape; optical storage media such as an optical disc, optical tape, or machine readable bar code; solid state electronic storage devices such as random access memory (RAM), or read only memory (ROM); or any other physical device or medium employed to store a computer  
5 program.

The video sequence to be transmitted is initially encoded off-line. This may be necessary for one of several reasons. For applications involving high resolution or stereo video, it may not be possible to encode the video sequence with high compression efficiency in real-time. Storage space may also be limited,  
10 necessitating the storage of the video in compressed format. FIG. 1 shows the initial compression process. The original video sequence (101) is sent to a video compression unit (102), which produces a compressed video bitstream (103) that is placed in a compressed video storage unit (104). The design of the video compression unit depends on whether the video sequence is a stereo sequence or a  
15 monocular sequence. FIG. 2 shows the subsequent transcoding and transmission of the compressed video bitstream to a decoder and ultimately to a display. The compressed video (103) is retrieved from the compressed video storage unit (104) and input to a video transcoding and transmission unit (201). Also input to the video transcoding and transmission unit is gaze point data (203) from a gaze-  
20 tracking device (202) that indicates the observer's (209) current gaze point (203a) on the display (208). In a preferred embodiment, the gaze-tracking device utilizes either conventional eye-tracking or head-tracking techniques to determine an observer's point of gaze (203a). The gaze-tracking device may report the current gaze location, or it may report a computed estimate of the gaze location  
25 corresponding to the time the next frame of data will be displayed. The video transcoding and transmission unit (201) also receives as input, system characteristics (210). The system characteristics are necessary to convert pixel measurements into viewing angle measurements, and may include the size and active area of the display, and the observer's distance from the display. The  
30 system characteristics also include a measurement of the error in the gaze-tracking device's estimate of the point of gaze (203a). This error is incorporated into the calculation of the amount of data that can be discarded from each region of an

image according to its distance from the gaze location.

Based on the current gaze location, the video transcoding and transmission unit (201) modifies the compressed data for the current video frame, forming a foveated compressed video bitstream (204), and sends it across the communications channel (205) to a video decoding unit (206). The decoded video (207) is sent to the display (208). The gaze-tracking device (202) then sends an updated value for the observer's point of gaze (203a) and the process is repeated for the next video frame.

#### 10 **MPEG-4-Based Foveated Video Coder**

The blocks in FIG. 1 and FIG. 2 will now be described in more detail with reference to a preferred embodiment. For a monocular video sequence, the preferred embodiment of the video compression unit (102) is based on the fine granularity scalability (FGS) of the streaming video profile of the MPEG 4 standard as described in Li ("Overview of Fine Granularity Scalability in MPEG-4 Video Standard", *IEEE Transactions on Circuits and Systems for Video Technology*, March 2001). FGS results in a compressed video bitstream as outlined in FIG. 3. The compressed bitstream contains a base layer (301) and an enhancement layer (302). The base layer is formed as a non-scalable, low-rate MPEG-compliant bitstream. In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the base layer is restricted to 'I' and 'P' frames. 'I' frames are encoded independently. 'P' frames are encoded as a prediction from a single temporally previous reference frame, plus an encoding of the residual prediction error. 'B' frames allow bidirectional prediction. As will be discussed in the following, this base layer restriction to 'I' and 'P' frames is preferred so that the transmission order of the video frames matches the display order of the video frames, allowing accurate foveation processing of each frame with minimal buffering. For each frame, the enhancement layer (302) contains a bit-plane encoding of the residual discrete cosine transform (DCT) coefficients (303). For 'I' frames, the residual DCT coefficients are the difference between the DCT coefficients of the original image and the DCT coefficients encoded in the base layer for that frame. For 'P' frames, the residual DCT coefficients are the difference between the DCT



coefficients of the motion compensated residual and the DCT coefficients encoded in the base layer for that frame.

While the previously described video compression unit is based on fine granularity scalability of the streaming video profile of MPEG 4, those skilled in the art will recognize that fine granularity scalability can be replaced with progressive fine granularity scalability, as described in Wu et. al. ("A Framework for Efficient Progressive Fine Granularity Scalable Video Coding," *IEEE Transactions on Circuits and Systems for Video Technology*, March 2001). Similarly, MPEG-based encoding of the base layer can be replaced with a more efficient encoding, such as the emerging H.26L technology ("H.26L-based fine granularity scalable video coding," *ISO/IEC JTC1/SC29/WG11 M7788*, December 2001).

Once the video sequence is compressed, it is stored, and is ready for future acquisition by the video transcoding and transmission unit (201). For a monocular video sequence, FIG. 4 shows the preferred embodiment of the video transcoder and transmitter (201). Each frame of the compressed video sequence is processed independently. The base layer compressed data (401) of the frame passes unchanged through the transcoder. The enhancement layer compressed data (402) of the frame is input to the enhancement layer foveation processing unit (403) which also takes as input the observer's (209) current gaze point (203a) on the display (208) and the system characteristics (210). The enhancement layer foveation processing unit modifies the enhancement layer (402) based on the gaze point and system characteristics, and outputs the foveated enhancement layer (404). The base layer (401) and foveated enhancement layer (404) are then sent by the transmitter (405) across the communications channel (205). The enhancement layer foveation processing unit (403) modifies the enhancement layer based on the current gaze point of the observer. By restricting the base layer of the compressed video sequence to 'I' and 'P' frames, the frame being transcoded is always the next frame to be displayed, and thus the current gaze point information is always used to modify the compressed stream of the next frame to be transmitted and displayed, as desired. Those skilled in the art will recognize, however, that if there is sufficient storage at the decoder to buffer an

additional decoded frame, it is also possible to use ‘B’ frames in the base layer to improve the coding efficiency of the base layer. In this case, the base layer for ‘P’ and ‘I’ frames must be transmitted out of display order, so that these frames can be used as references for ‘B’ frames. Data from the enhancement layer is not  
 5 included in a reference used for motion compensation, however, and thus the enhancement layer for each frame can be transmitted in display order, allowing each enhancement layer frame to be foveated based on the appropriate current gaze information.

The enhancement layer foveation processing unit (403) will now be  
 10 discussed in greater detail in FIG. 5. For a given compressed video frame, the enhancement layer contains a bit-plane encoding of residual DCT coefficients (501). Initially, this bitstream is separated by an enhancement layer parser (502) into the individual compressed bitstreams for each 8x8 DCT block (503). Each block is then processed independently by the block foveation unit (504). The  
 15 block foveation unit also takes as input the observer’s gaze point data (203), system characteristics (210), and a coefficient threshold table (507). The block foveation unit (504) decodes the residual DCT coefficients for a block, discards visually unimportant information, and recompresses the coefficients. The foveated compressed blocks (505) are then reorganized by the foveated bitstream  
 20 recombining unit (506) into a single foveated enhancement layer bitstream (508).

Foveated image processing exploits the human visual system’s decreasing sensitivity away from the point of gaze (203a). This sensitivity is a function of both spatial frequency as well as angular distance (referred to as eccentricity) from the gaze point. For any given spatial frequency  $f$  expressed in  
 25 units of cycles per degree of visual angle, and eccentricity  $e$  expressed in degrees of visual angle, a contrast threshold function (CT) can be used to derive the minimum observable contrast for that frequency and eccentricity. Although many different contrast threshold formulae have been derived in the prior art, in a preferred embodiment, the contrast threshold function (CT) is given by:

$$30 \quad CT(f, e) = \left[ N + \frac{\eta \sigma^2}{f^2 + \sigma^2} \right] \exp(\alpha f + kfe). \quad (1)$$

where  $N$ ,  $\eta$ ,  $\sigma$ , and  $\alpha$  are parameters with estimated values of 0.0024, 0.058, 0.1

cycle per degree, and 0.17 degree, respectively, for luminance signals at moderate to bright adaptation levels. These parameters can be adjusted for chrominance signals, which occur when an image is represented in a luminance/chrominance space for efficient compression. The parameters can also be adjusted to account  
 5 for the decreased sensitivity that occurs when the adaptation level is decreased (which would occur with a low brightness display). Also,  $k$  is a parameter that controls the rate of change of the contrast threshold with eccentricity. In the preferred embodiment, the value of  $k$  will typically be between 0.030 and 0.057 with a preferred value of 0.045. Notice that based on Equation (1), the contrast  
 10 threshold increases rapidly with eccentricity at high spatial frequencies. These relationships indicate that high spatial frequency information is only retrievable by the center of the retina.

In the proposed invention, the contrast threshold function is applied to individual DCT coefficients. The spatial frequency associated with a DCT  
 15 coefficient  $c$  is computed based on the horizontal and vertical frequencies of the corresponding two-dimensional basis function:

$$f_c = \sqrt{(f_c^h)^2 + (f_c^v)^2}, \quad (2)$$

where  $f_c^h$  and  $f_c^v$  are the horizontal and vertical spatial frequencies, respectively, of the two-dimensional basis function associated with the DCT coefficient  $c$ . The  
 20 frequencies  $f_c^h$  and  $f_c^v$  are also in units of cycles per degree of visual angle, and in a preferred embodiment,  $f_c^h$  and  $f_c^v$  are chosen to be the center of the horizontal and vertical frequency ranges, respectively, nominally associated with the two-dimensional DCT basis function.

The computation of the frequency in Equation (2) gives no  
 25 indication of the orientation of the two-dimensional frequency. It is well known, however, that the human visual system is less sensitive to diagonal lines than to horizontal or vertical lines of equal frequency. The contrast threshold given by Equation (1) can be modified accordingly to account for orientation.

The eccentricity associated with a DCT coefficient  $c$  is given by:

$$e_c = \sqrt{(x_c - x_0)^2 + (y_c - y_0)^2}, \quad (3)$$

where  $(x_0, y_0)$  is the gaze point of the image, measured in degrees as a visual angle from the center of the image, and  $(x_c, y_c)$  is an angular measurement between the center of the image and the location of the DCT coefficient, where the location of the DCT coefficient is taken to be the spatial center of the corresponding DCT block. If a plurality of gaze points are present, the eccentricity can be taken to be the minimum of the individual eccentricities calculated over all gaze points.

The eccentricity can further be adjusted to account for error inherent in the gaze-location measurement. A conservative value of eccentricity is obtained by assuming the gaze-location estimate overestimates the actual eccentricity by an error of  $\tilde{e}$ . A revised estimate of the eccentricity used in Equation (1) is then given by

$$\hat{e}_c = e_c - \tilde{e}, \quad (4)$$

if  $e_c$  is greater than  $\tilde{e}$ , and zero otherwise. The value of  $\tilde{e}$  affects the size of the region of the image that is transmitted at high fidelity. Larger values of  $\tilde{e}$  correspond to larger regions of the image transmitted at high fidelity.

For a DCT coefficient  $c$ , the threshold for the observable magnitude of that coefficient is given by:

$$T_c = L_0 CT(f_c, \hat{e}_c), \quad (5)$$

where  $L_0$  is the mean luminance value of the signal.

Thus a DCT coefficient  $c$  with magnitude less than  $T_c$  can be represented as having magnitude zero without introducing any visual error. This visually tolerable quantization error is assumed to be valid across all coefficient magnitudes. Hence  $T_c$  determines the number of visually unimportant bitplanes for that coefficient that can be discarded, based on the following formula:

$$discard_c = \lfloor \log_2 T_c \rfloor. \quad (6)$$

Thus for an observable threshold less than 2, no bitplanes can be discarded. For a threshold between 2 and 4, one bitplane can be discarded, and so forth. For a coefficient  $c$  with magnitude greater than  $T_c$ , this quantization scheme is conservative, as a midpoint reconstruction of the coefficient guarantees a quantization error no greater than  $T_c/2$ . If additional compression is desired, the

thresholds can be scaled in magnitude to result in increased discarded bitplanes.

To optimize the computation of the number of discardable bitplanes for each coefficient, a coefficient threshold table is computed off-line, and passed into the block foveation unit. The coefficient threshold table contains  
 5 64 rows, one row for each of the 64 coefficients in an 8x8 DCT block. Each row has several column entries. The  $n^{\text{th}}$  column entry, where the first column is  $n=1$ , indicates the minimum eccentricity at which a coefficient of the current row's spatial frequency can discard  $n$  bitplanes.

FIG. 6 shows an example of the discardable coefficient bitplanes  
 10 for a DCT block in the enhancement layer. The horizontal axis indicates the bitplane, with the most significant bitplane on the left. The DCT coefficients are numbered from zero to 63 along the vertical axis, corresponding to the zig-zag ordering used to encode them. For each coefficient, there is a threshold bitplane, beyond which all of the remaining bitplanes can be discarded.

15 In a preferred embodiment of the block foveation unit (504), the compressed data for a DCT block is transcoded bitplane by bitplane. Each bitplane is decoded and recoded with all discardable coefficients set to zero. This increases the compression efficiency of the bitplane coding, as a string of zero coefficients concluding a DCT block bitplane can typically be encoded more  
 20 efficiently than the original values. This scheme has the advantage that the compressed bitplanes remain compliant with the original coding scheme, and thus the decoder does not need any modification to be able to decode the foveated bitstream.

Inasmuch as the process according to the invention operates upon  
 25 the DCT coefficients, it is helpful to understand that the encoded video need only be partially decoded to recover the frequency coefficients. The decoding thus described is "partial" because there is no requirement or need to perform an inverse DCT on the transformed data in order to practice the invention; instead, the transformed data is processed by an appropriate decoder (e.g., a Huffman  
 30 decoder) to obtain the data. The foveation technique is then applied to the data, and the foveated data is re-encoded (i.e., transcoded) and transmitted to a display, where it is decoded and inverse transformed to get back to the original data, as

now modified by the foveation processing.

In an alternative embodiment of the block foveation unit, the compressed data corresponding to discardable coefficients at the end of a DCT block bitplane are not replaced with a symbol representing a string of zeroes, but rather are discarded entirely. This scheme further improves compression efficiency, as the compressed data corresponding to the discardable coefficients at the end of a DCT block bitplane are completely eliminated. For the corresponding foveated bitstream to be decoded properly, however, the decoder must also be modified to process the same gaze point information and formulae used by the block foveation unit to determine which coefficient bitplanes have been discarded.

The foveated block bitstreams are input to the foveated bitstream recombining unit (506), which interleaves the compressed data. The foveated bitstream recombining unit may also apply visual weights to the different macroblocks, effectively bitplane shifting the data of some of the macroblocks when forming the interleaved bitstream. Visual weighting can be used to give priority to data corresponding to the region of interest near the gaze point.

#### **JPEG2000-Based Foveated Video Coder**

In an alternative embodiment of the invention, the video compression unit (102) is a JPEG2000-based video coder, where JPEG2000 is described in ISO/IEC JTC1/SC29 WG1 N1890, JPEG2000 Part I Final Committee Draft International Standard, September 2000. Temporal redundancies are still accounted for using motion estimation and compensation and the bitstream retains a base layer and enhancement layer structure as described for the preferred embodiment in FIG. 3. In the alternative embodiment, however, JPEG2000 is used to encode 'I' frames and also to encode motion compensated residuals of 'P' frames. FIG. 7 describes the video compression unit (102) in detail for the JPEG2000-based video coder.

The frame to be JPEG2000 encoded (the original input for 'I' frames; the motion residual for 'P' frames) is compressed in a JPEG2000 compression unit (703) using two JPEG2000 quality layers. Note that the term layer is used independently in describing both the organization of a JPEG2000

bitstream as well as the division of the overall video bitstream. The first JPEG2000 quality layer, as well as the main header information, form a JPEG2000-compliant bitstream (704) that is included in the base layer bitstream (712). The second quality layer (705) of the JPEG2000 bitstream is included in the enhancement layer bitstream (709). In a preferred embodiment of the JPEG2000-based compression unit, the compressed JPEG2000 bitstream is formed using the RESTART mode, such that the compressed bitstream for each codeblock is terminated after each coding pass, and the length of each coding pass is encoded in the bitstream. Alternatively, the JPEG2000 compression unit (703) outputs rate information (706) associated with each of the coding passes included in the second quality layer. This information is encoded by the rate encoder (707), and the encoded rate information (708) is included as part of the enhancement layer bitstream (709). Coding methods for the rate encoder are discussed in commonly-assigned, copending U.S. Serial No. 10/108,151 (“Producing and Encoding Rate-Distortion Information Allowing Optimal Transcoding of Compressed Digital Image”).

The first layer of the JPEG2000 bitstream (704) is decoded in a JPEG2000 decompression unit (713) and added to the motion compensated frame for ‘P’ frames, or left as is for ‘I’ frames. The resulting values are clipped in a clipping unit (714) to the allowable range for the initial input, and stored in a frame memory (715) for use in motion estimation (701) and motion compensation (702) for the following frame. Motion vectors determined in the motion estimation process are encoded by the motion vector encoder (710). The encoded motion vector information (711) is included in the base layer bitstream (712).

The JPEG2000-based compressed video bitstream is stored for subsequent retrieval and transmission to a decoder and ultimately a display. FIG. 8 shows in detail the video transcoding and transmission unit (201) used to produce a foveated compressed video bitstream in the case of JPEG2000 compressed video input. If RESTART mode is used for the JPEG2000 compressed bitstream, the length of each compressed coding pass contained in the bitstream can be extracted from the packet headers in the bitstream. Alternatively, rate information encoded separately can be passed to a rate decoder (801), which

decodes the rate information for each coding pass and passes this information to the JPEG2000 transcoder and foveation processing unit (802). The entire JPEG2000 stream, along with the observer gaze point data (203) and system characteristics (210), are also sent to the JPEG2000 transcoder and foveation processing unit (802). The JPEG2000 transcoder and foveation processing unit leaves the base layer bitstream unchanged from its input. It outputs the multi-layered foveated enhancement bitstream (803).

Each JPEG2000 codeblock corresponds to a specific region of the image and a specific frequency band. This location and frequency information can be used as in the previous DCT-based implementation to compute a contrast threshold for each codeblock, and correspondingly a threshold for the minimum observable coefficient magnitude for that codeblock. All coding passes encoding information for bitplanes below this threshold can be discarded. This can be done explicitly, by discarding the compressed data. Alternatively, the discardable coding passes can be coded in the final layer of the multi-layered foveated bitstream, such that the data is only transmitted in the case that all more visually important data has been transmitted in previous layers, and bandwidth remains for additional information to be sent.

In a preferred embodiment of the JPEG2000-based transcoder and foveation processing unit (802), the eccentricity angle between the gaze point and a codeblock is based on the shortest distance between the gaze point and the region of the image corresponding to the codeblock. Alternatively, the eccentricity can be based on the distance from the gaze point to the center of the region of the image corresponding to the codeblock. The horizontal and vertical frequencies for each codeblock are chosen to be the central frequencies of the nominal frequency range associated with the corresponding subband. Given these horizontal and vertical frequencies, the two-dimensional spatial frequency for a codeblock can be calculated as previously in Equation (2). Finally, the contrast threshold and minimum observable coefficient magnitude for the codeblock can be calculated as previously in Equations (1) and (5). Rate information available for each coding pass is used to determine the amount of compressed data that can be discarded from each codeblock's compressed bitstream.



Among the visually important information to transmit, several layering schemes are possible. In one scheme, the foveated data is aggregated in a single layer. Alternatively, the data can be ordered spatially, such that all coding passes corresponding to codeblocks near the gaze point are transmitted in their entirety prior to the transmission of any data distant from the gaze point.

In the JPEG2000-based video coding scheme, multiple JPEG2000 layers can be included in the foveated enhancement layer to provide scalability during transmission. JPEG2000 layer boundaries can be chosen so that the data included in a particular layer approximates one bitplane of data per coefficient. Finer granularity can be introduced with minimal overhead cost by including additional layers in the foveated enhancement bitstream. The enhancement bitstream is then transmitted in layer progressive order while bandwidth remains.

#### **Matching Pursuits-Based Foveated Video Coder**

In another alternative embodiment of the invention, the video compression unit (102) utilizes matching pursuits, as described in ("Very Low Bit-Rate Video Coding Based on Matching Pursuits," Neff and Zakhor, *IEEE Transactions on Circuits and Systems for Video Technology*, February 1997), to encode prediction residuals. In this embodiment, a dictionary of basis functions is used to encode a residual as a series of atoms, where each atom is defined as a particular dictionary entry at a particular spatial location of the image at a particular magnitude quantization level. During foveation, atoms may be discarded or more coarsely quantized based on their spatial frequency and location relative to the point of gaze.

#### **Foveation Coding for Stereo Video Sequences**

The previously described base layer and enhancement layer structure for encoding, transcoding and transmitting foveated video can also be modified to incorporate stereo video sequences. For the present invention, preferred embodiments of the video compression unit (102) and video transcoding and transmission unit (201) for encoding, transcoding and transmitting stereo video are detailed in FIG. 9 and FIG. 10.

In FIG. 9, the stereo video is compressed using a base layer (901) and enhancement layer (902). The base layer is formed using the multiview profile of the MPEG 2 video coding standard. Specifically, the left eye sequence of the base layer (903) is encoded using only 'I' and 'P' frames. The right eye sequence (904) is encoded using 'P' and 'B' frames, where the disparity estimation is always from the temporally co-located left eye image, and the motion estimation is from the previous right eye image. Although in MPEG 2 the right eye sequence fulfills the role of the temporal extension and is itself considered an enhancement layer, in the present invention, the entire MPEG 2 bitstream created using the multiview profile is considered to be the base layer. As in the case for monocular video, the enhancement layer contains a bitplane encoding of the residual DCT coefficients of each frame (905).

FIG. 10 details the video transcoding and transmission unit (201) for a stereo application. Corresponding to each stereo frame that the observer sees, there are both a left eye frame and a right eye frame that are processed using foveation information. The left eye base layer (1001), containing both the 'I' or 'P' frame corresponding to the left eye view, and the right eye base layer (1002), containing both the 'P' or 'B' frame corresponding to the right eye view, are passed unchanged to the video transmitter (1007). The enhancement layers (1003 and 1004), containing the bitplane DCT data for both left and right eyes respectively, are passed into the enhancement layer foveation processing unit (1005) along with the gaze point data (203) and system characteristics (210). The left eye and right eye enhancement layers (1003 and 1004) are processed independently using the foveation processing algorithm illustrated in FIG. 5 for monocular data. The resulting foveated enhancement layer data (1006) is passed to the transmitter (1007), where it is combined with the base layer to form the foveated compressed video bitstream (204) and transmitted across the communications channel (205).

Stereo mismatch may be introduced into a stereo encoding scheme by encoding one view at a higher fidelity than the other view. In the base layer (as illustrated in FIG. 9), this can typically be achieved by encoding the second view, represented by the right eye sequence (904), at a lower quality than the first view,

represented by the left eye sequence (903). In the enhancement layer, mismatch may be introduced by encoding fewer DCT bitplanes for one view than for the other. In a preferred embodiment, stereo mismatch is introduced during foveation by scaling the contrast thresholds computed for one view, so that additional  
5 information is discarded from this view.

Those skilled in the art will recognize that in the previous stereo encoding scheme as illustrated in FIGS. 9 and 10, the roles of the left and right eye sequences can be exchanged.

In an alternative embodiment of the video compression unit for  
10 stereo sequences, the sequence is encoded using the temporal scalability extension of the MPEG 4 streaming video profile. FIG. 11 details the corresponding video compression unit. The left eye sequence (1101) is compressed at low bit rate using an MPEG 2 non-scalable bitstream employing 'I' and 'P' frames to form the base layer (1102). The right eye sequence (1103) is encoded into the temporal  
15 layer (1104). Each right eye frame is motion compensated from the corresponding base layer (left eye) frame, and bitplane DCT coding is used for the entire residual. A final layer, referred to as the fine granularity scalability (FGS) layer (1105), contains a bitplane DCT coding of the residual for each frame in the base layer. The temporal layer and FGS layer are sent to a foveation processing  
20 unit, as in FIG. 10, to create the foveated bitstream.

In another embodiment of the invention for stereo video, DCT coding and subsequent foveation processing is replaced with JPEG2000 coding and subsequent foveation processing, as described in the section on JPEG2000-based foveation video coding.

25 In another embodiment of the invention for stereo video, matching pursuits, as described in the section on matching pursuits-based video coding, is used for the encoding and subsequent foveation of stereo prediction residuals.

Further modification and variation can be made to the disclosed embodiments without departing from the subject and spirit of the invention as  
30 defined in the following claims. Such modifications and variations, as included within the scope of these claims, are meant to be considered part of the invention as described.

**PARTS LIST**

101	original video sequence
102	video compression unit
103	compressed video bitstream
104	compressed video storage unit
201	video transcoding and transmission unit
202	gaze-tracking device
203	gaze point data
203a	point of gaze
204	foveated compressed video bitstream
205	communications channel
206	video decoding unit
207	decoded video
208	display
209	observer
210	system characteristics
301	base layer
302	enhancement layer
303	residual DCT coefficient bitplanes
401	frame base layer
402	frame enhancement layer
403	enhancement layer foveation processing unit
404	foveated enhancement layer
405	transmitter
501	compressed residual DCT bitplanes
502	enhancement layer parser
503	compressed block bitstreams of 8x8 DCT blocks
504	block foveation unit
505	foveated compressed blocks
506	foveated bitstream recombining unit
507	coefficient threshold table
508	foveated enhancement layer bitstream

701	motion estimation
702	motion compensation
703	JPEG2000 compression unit
704	JPEG2000-compliant bitstream containing layer 1
705	JPEG2000 layer 2
706	rate information
707	rate encoder
708	encoded rate information
709	enhancement bitstream
710	motion vector encoder
711	encoded motion information
712	base layer bitstream
713	JPEG2000 decompression unit
714	clipping unit
715	frame memory
801	rate decoder
802	JPEG2000 transcoder and foveation processing unit
803	multi-layered foveation enhancement bitstream
901	base layer
902	enhancement layer
903	left eye sequence
904	right eye sequence
905	residual DCT coefficient bitplanes
1001	left eye base layer
1002	right eye base layer
1003	left eye enhancement layer
1004	right eye enhancement layer
1005	enhancement layer foveation processing unit
1006	foveated enhancement layer
1007	transmitter
1101	left eye sequence
1102	base layer

1103 right eye sequence

1104 temporal layer

1105 FGS layer